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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

On Sunday, Ha'aretz and other media quoted a State Department spokesman as saying that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will cut short her trip to Africa and visit the area at the end of the week in response to the escalation of violence in the territories.

During the weekend, all media highlighted both escalation between Israel and the Palestinians in and around the Gaza Strip, and the march toward Gush Katif planned for this afternoon by the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories. It is slated to start from the Negev town of Netivot.

All media reported that on Sunday, PM Sharon reiterated his instructions to the security forces at the cabinet meeting Sunday to take "all measures, without restrictions, to halt terrorism." At the same time, the media said that the government agreed to give PA Chairman [President] "one more chance" to clamp down on terror on its own. On Sunday, all media emphasized that the IDF was poised for a massive sweep into Gaza. However, Yediot stressed on Sunday that Sharon's instructions to the IDF to apply force without limits were a declaration of intentions meant to pressure Abbas. The media reported that six Israelis were hurt, two moderately and four lightly, by mortar fire on Gush Katif on Sunday. Ha'aretz and Maariv reported that on Sunday, Israeli snipers shot to death senior Hamas operative Said Siyam on the roof of his home in Khan Yunis. Ha'aretz reported that an Islamic Jihad militant was killed Sunday in clashes with the IDF near Netzarim (Gaza Strip). Leading media reported that three Hamas militants were assassinated on Friday in the West Bank. The media reported that the IDF arrested 21 wanted men from Hamas and Islamic Jihad in operations in the West Bank on Sunday and last night.

All media reported that, despite a police ban, many demonstrators intend to participate in the pro-settler march towards Gush Katif (most banners on Monday). All media cited IDF and police's fears of violent clashes between demonstrators and 10,000 to 20,000 security personnel -- figures varied depending on the media. The media reported that late on Sunday night, hundreds of anti-disengagement protesters attempted to block the Kissufim crossing into Gaza and that they were pushed aside by police and troops. The media reported that nine IDF soldiers -- all of whom are students in hesder yeshivas (in which students combine military service with religious studies) -- refused on Saturday night to follow orders and participate in an operation to prevent Israeli citizens from entering the Gaza Strip. Two of them, who are hiding in Gush Katif, are considered AWOL.

Leading media quoted Abbas as saying on Sunday that the PA is determined to stop the rocket launching. Ha'aretz reported that an Egyptian security delegation arrived in the Gaza Strip on Sunday in a bid to forge a reconciliation between the PA and Hamas's leadership.

Ha'aretz (Aluf Benn) cited reports transmitted to Jerusalem in recent weeks by the Israeli Embassy in Washington as saying that Ambassador Richard (Dick) Jones, a professional diplomat from the State Department, is the leading candidate to replace Dan

Kurtzer as U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Leading media quoted Sheikh Raed Salah, leader of Israel's Islamic Movement (northern branch), as saying on his release from prison on Sunday that he would not be deterred from violating the terms of his parole, which bars him from coming to Jerusalem during the next four months without special police permission.

Jerusalem Post reported that members of Iraq's National Assembly have told the newspaper that, one month before the deadline for the creation of the new Iraqi constitution, a debate on whether to include Jews as an official minority has broken out in the assembly.

On Sunday, Maariv reported that Mohammed Sadique Khan, one of London's suicide bombers, visited Israel in 2003, before the bombing of the Mike's Place pub in Tel Aviv.

On Sunday, Yediot reported that this week, the FBI warned the Israeli Consulate-General in Los Angeles that Islamic extremists planned to attack Israeli and Jewish targets in the city.

On Sunday, Yediot quoted Iran's Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi as saying on Saturday that the U.S. and Israel are trying to recruit spies in Iran.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The fear of a foiled evacuation of the settlers ... joining the Americans' resounding failure to stabilize Iraq is the principal motivating element behind Rice's lightning-quick visit to the region."

Chief economic editor Sever Plotker opined in the lead editorial of Yediot Aharonot: "The concept of unilateral action, which has recently seeped into the road map ... will not stand up to the test of Middle East reality."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "It is not clear what more Rice can say to Abbas, to clarify to him how serious his weakness is."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "A heavy shadow hovers over the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. It is the shadow of the withdrawal from Lebanon.... [But] the Lebanese model will not recur."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "The Yesha Council is not waging a campaign for Gush Katif, but a campaign against the State of Israel."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "The U.S. Secretary of State is coming to the region and Sharon

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will be required to make a gesture in her honor, and to pull out the IDF forces."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Whatever the rationale for putting new [Palestinian] territorial grievances on the agenda, it would do well if our government didn't sweep these under the rug."

Block Quotes:

I. "Threatening and Calming"

Diplomatic correspondent Shimon Shiffer wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (July 17): "The Israelis aren't impressed any more with Abu Mazen's cries of woe and his claims of weakness.... In talks that were held by Shaul Mofaz and aides to Prime Minister Sharon with Condoleezza Rice and her close aides, the Israelis demanded that intense pressure be applied on Abu Mazen, whose refusal to clash forcibly with Islamic Jihad and Hamas could severely impede the evacuation of the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria [i.e. the northernmost part of the West Bank]. Without doubt, Rice's decision to come urgently to the region ... stems from the sense of urgency the Israelis and the Secretary of State's man in the field, General Ward, managed to impress upon Ms. Rice. The Americans are invested in Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, and

this bears upon the Bush administration's prestige. The fear of a foiled evacuation of the settlers from Gaza and northern Samaria joining the Americans' resounding failure to stabilize Iraq is the principal motivating element behind Rice's lightning-quick visit to the region."

II. "No Unilateral Withdrawal"

Chief economic editor Sever Plotker opined in the lead editorial of Yediot Aharonot (July 18): "Apparently, there is no such thing as unilateral withdrawal: just as Israel did not succeed in imposing the occupation on the Palestinians, it will also not succeed in imposing the end of occupation on them under conditions that are convenient for it and for it alone. For if the withdrawal from Gaza is being served to the Palestinians on a 'unilateral' platter and stands to be carried out under any conditions, then what card can Abu Mazen's administration use to subdue Hamas? And what incentive does Hamas have to yield, even temporarily? When two nations are in a state of open bloody conflict, one side cannot extricate itself from the conflict unilaterally. The concept of unilateral action, which has recently seeped into the road map, in which each side will make its moves separately without taking into account what the other side is doing -- Israel will withdraw from the territories, and the Palestinians will eradicate terrorism -- will not stand up to the test of Middle East reality. We must return to the formula of negotiations with the Palestinians that Binyamin Netanyahu proposed in the past when serving as Israel's prime minister: 'If they give, they will receive; if they don't give, they won't receive.' This formula is all the more valid today: after all, Netanyahu only gave an outspoken verbal phrasing of the principle of 'land for peace,' which has been a guiding principle of Israeli policy since 1967."

III. "Fire Before the Evacuation"

Ha'aretz editorialized (July 17): "The calm period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since the end of the Yasser Arafat era and the beginning of Mahmoud Abbas' regime, may soon be over.... Busy with the complex problem of evacuating thousands of citizens and blocking tens of thousands of evacuation opponents, Israel hoped that pressure from the U.S., Egypt, and others would curb the Palestinian urge to exploit the evacuation to attack Israeli citizens and soldiers.... The Israeli support for restraint was replaced by a recommendation for immediate action, in view of the rigid evacuation deadline.... The Palestinians are insisting on proving to Israel that Hamas and Islamic Jihad not only drove it out of Gaza with fire, but will continue to fire at the Negev and coastal plain from the liberated territory and send suicide bombers into Israel. This could weaken the support for the evacuation before it begins, or as it progresses. Abbas failed in his efforts to persuade the Hamas and Jihad leaders to preserve the cease-fire.... The sudden escalation is bringing U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flying to Jerusalem and Ramallah, for the second time in a month. It is not clear what more Rice can say to Abbas, to clarify to him how serious his weakness is. If he doesn't come to his senses within days, he will be risking not only his rule but the precedent-setting evacuation of the Gaza Strip settlements."

IV. "A Heavy Shadow"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (July 17): "A heavy shadow hovers over the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. It is the shadow of the withdrawal from Lebanon, which the IDF left overnight a little over five years ago.... Just like we entered Lebanon to seek revenge for the spectacles of the Yom Kippur War, so we will leave Gaza to fix the impression left by Lebanon.... [But] the way things look now, the chances of the disengagement process from Gaza going quietly and in coordination with the Palestinians are slim.... Everything will be ready for an immediate, forceful incursion that could result in the occupation of parts of the Gaza Strip for the duration of the disengagement process. As noted, the Lebanese model will not recur."

V. "A Campaign Against the State"

Ha'aretz editorialized (July 18): "The Yesha Council of Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza is supposed to launch its march on Gush Katif today -- a march that is meant to thwart the decision to disengage from the Gaza Strip that was made by the state's authorized institutions.... According to Yesha Council members,

the march is not supposed to involve clashes with soldiers and policemen or violence of any sort. But this is a hollow and, in fact, deceptive promise. The Yesha leaders know very well, from their experience with similar demonstrations, that violence is implicit in their plans.... The Yesha Council is not waging a campaign for Gush Katif, but a campaign against the State of Israel.... The danger to the state reflected in the march on Gush Katif is no smaller, and in practice is even greater, than the danger posed by other demonstrations that the security forces have been forced to handle."

VI. "The Writing Was on the Wall"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (July 18): "Even if the IDF takes steps against the terrorist organizations in a land operation, this action will be very limited. Anyway, the terrorists are already expecting it, and its effect will be marginal, since the U.S. Secretary of State is coming to the region and Sharon will be required to make a gesture in her honor, and to pull out the IDF forces."
VII. "Dahlan's Deadly Claims"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (July 17): "The fact that the rocket attack on Netiv Ha'asara last week came a short time after PA Minister Muhammad Dahlan took Israeli disengagement coordinators by surprise when he seemingly casually raised demands for that village's land cannot be written off as a mere unfortunate coincidence.... Though Dahlan later declared that the PA isn't filing claims for lands within Israel proper, he and fellow PA higher-ups may simply disagree on the definition of what constitutes 'Israel proper'.... Though government spokesmen branded this a non-starter, the very possibility that the strip north of the Erez Crossing could now conceivably become disputed is potentially explosive.... Whatever the rationale for putting new territorial grievances on the agenda, it would do well if our government didn't sweep these under the rug, politically embarrassing as additional pretexts for Palestinian belligerence may be at this specific turbulent juncture. Letting even artificially concocted complaints take hold and fester can only make matters worse. Even a hint of a new casus belli must be faced head on now. Israel must explain its case articulately and unhesitatingly both at home and abroad, before a new issue is conjured and gets out of hand."

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